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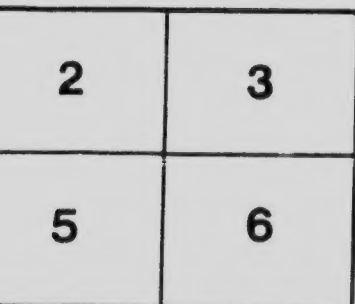
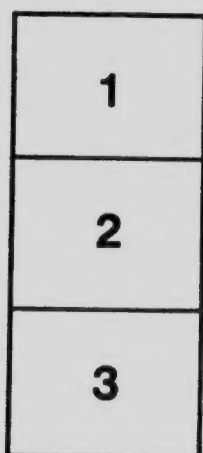
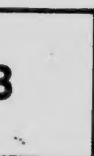
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DUCK RAISING

BY

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Importance and Advantages.—The duck, a web-footed aquatic bird, similar to the goose but smaller, is one of the easiest and most profitable fowls to raise when suitable ground and sufficient water are at hand, and one which gives the choicest products. Water is an absolute necessity in duck raising. It is not essential that it should be running water or that there should be an abundance of it; it must, however, be renewed frequently so as to be kept relatively fresh and clean.



Fig. 1—Indian Runners. (The breeding stock is fed twice a day.)

The successful duck-raiser must have ingenuity, activity and experience and be a close observer. It is easy enough to indicate a general method of breeding and handling but climatic conditions, facilities, local resources, feeding and care, have such an influence on breeding that a method that might be excellent in one district might be a failure elsewhere.

DOMINION EXPERIMENTAL FARMS.

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The Plant.—Duck raising does not require a very elaborate plant. A board shed, a shed covered with tar paper or straw, is quite sufficient for the ducklings in summer. The duck house should be built so as to avoid dampness, and the floor should be covered with a thick litter of straw or similar material, which should be renewed frequently. For raising on a larger scale, a larger building is required; it should be well closed on three sides with movable sections and a wire door in front. (Fig. 1.) In winter an ordinary hen house will do very well if it is well ventilated, well situated, dry and kept very clean. When there is no stream of water, pond or pool nearby—for the use of the breeders—a small cement basin or reservoir or simply a zinc or galvanized iron box, which is kept filled with water, will do.



Fig. 2.—Ducklings four weeks old. (For rapid growth, let them run but feed them well.)

Breed.—The choice of the breed is very important. Preference should be given to the breeds that are known to be of superior quality, as regards the quality of flesh, size, rapidity of development, etc., as such breeds are always the most profitable for the market or for home consumption. There is a large number of varieties of ducks which cost as much to raise or to care for as choice breeds and are not nearly so profitable.

The most popular breeds for market are the Pekin, the Rouen and the Aylesbury, all of which give a well-flavoured flesh. The Muscovy is very large in size with very fine colouring, the male of which, crossed with the common duck, gives a fine but sterile duck which is very popular for fattening purposes.

The average weight of these various breeds is from seven to ten pounds. They are very hardy, very early, and good layers (with the exception of the Muscovy duck), of a large size, with a delicate flesh, of good flavour; they put on flesh rapidly. The young ducks of these breeds are very easy to raise.

There is, however, an objection to the Pekin duck, which should be noted; it is extremely shy and when frightened, he may lose his head, run wildly around the pen and hurt himself, even seriously.

Next comes the Indian Runner, smaller, weighing not more than four to four and one-half pounds; the plumage is white and light fawn coloured. Some times these two colours are remarkably regular; often, however, they are replaced by other colours and do not always show the required regularity.

The Indian Runner duck is a very good layer and may under good conditions lay as many as 200 eggs in a year. These eggs, of a white colour are very popular, as they have a better flavour than those of Pekin ducks; the yoke is not quite so thick and the white not so opaque. The flesh of the Indian Runner duck is very fine, of a very good flavour, and this breed fattens easily. Its only objection is its small size.

Laying and Incubation.—The duck, with the exception of the Indian Runner, is not noted for heavy egg production but the Indian Runners frequently lay as many as the ordinary hen and may lay every month in the year. Usually the other ducks do not lay before spring. When they are at liberty to go where they please, they may hide their eggs in nests which are built outside the poultry yard, or they may drop them any place about the premises. Therefore it is better to keep them closed in until after laying, which takes place during the forenoon.

One male is sufficient for four to eight females. When there are too many males in a flock at mating time, they quarrel and the eggs are not properly fertilized. The eggs kept for incubation should be of average size and as fresh as possible. However, duck eggs keep their fertility longer than hen eggs. Eggs kept for incubation should receive special care; they should be kept in a cool place, on a layer of bran, sawdust or dry sand. As duck eggs are very susceptible to cold, they should be covered if set under a hen, when she leaves her nest in quest of food.

The duck is a good sitter but is seldom used for this purpose. Preference is generally given to the hen, which takes very good care of the ducklings. Large hens should be selected for the purpose. The hatching lasts from 26 to 29 days. Artificial incubation is generally used in commercial plants. It enables the breeder to have the ducklings ready for the market at an early date.

Care of Ducklings.—When the ducklings are hatched, they should be left for ten hours or so under their mother or in the incubator; and should not have anything to eat for 24 to 48 hours. They may be allowed a little water and milk in a shallow pan to drink so that they may just dip their bill without wetting their bodies. If they should become wet they ought to be put near a fire, otherwise they become chilled and often die. The first feed should be a mash consisting of stale bread soaked in milk, hard boiled eggs, bran, green food, finely chopped. Curdled milk may be added. Later on a fairly soft mash of corn flour mixed with cooked potatoes will make an excellent meal. Such roots as carrots, turnips cooked beets, may also be used. It is well to add a small quantity of animal food, blood, meat, flour, butcher's scraps, etc.

The mash should not be too thin, otherwise it will cause diarrhoea. A small quantity of gravel or coarse sand should be added.

All cooked roots and tubers, lettuce, fish (in small quantity) given judiciously are all suitable for duck raising.

Cold and rain are very injurious. A duckling that has got wet by rain or otherwise in the first eight or ten days of his life is in great danger of dying. He drowns quickly in little water. Do not leave wet ducklings in the sun for the purpose of drying them, they might get sunstruck and die. Do not let them take a bath until eight or ten days after birth, and then only for a very short while and if for market they are better kept from swimming at all.

If no running water is available or if there is no pool big enough so that they can swim freely, a tank should be set up with a sloping board at both ends so that the ducklings may easily go up, or come down.

When the duckling is a month old if for stock purposes, it may be given its entire freedom if there is a stream in proximity. All it requires is a meal at noon and one at night. Ducklings well fed, in regularly increasing rations, are ready to market at two to three months old.

Ducklings that are reserved for breeding purposes should be selected among the most thrifty specimens and from an early hatching.

Ration for one month old Ducklings.—Bran, 2 parts; cornmeal, 2 parts, shorts, 2 parts; beefscraps, $\frac{1}{2}$ part; gravel, crushed oyster shells or sand, 3 per cent mixed with milk or water, feed them all they will clear up three times a day. (Fig. 2.)

Fattening.—Fattening may be started as soon as the ducks are eight weeks old. They are fattened in a yard or pen. They should be isolated as much as possible in a dark building well ventilated and provided with a good litter, always kept very clean. The food should consist of mash mixed with milk, rather thin, and composed of cooked potatoes mixed with cornmeal, barley-meal, shorts, beets, cooked carrots, and green feed. Ducks are ready to kill when they move around lazily and when they refuse their feed. As a rule it will take about two weeks to finish them. Duck fattening is very profitable as this bird has a rapid growth and may, in a few months, reach a fairly heavy weight.

The following experiment, which was carried on by this division with 66 ducks in May and June, 1914, shows that the breeding and fattening of ducks is a profitable industry.

Total weight of 66 ducklings, two weeks old.. . . .	lb.	19
" " 66 " ten weeks old	"	310

Cost of feed and value of the products at the market price of Ottawa,
June 27, 1914—

June 27, 1914—	
Bran—160 lb. at \$1.35 per 100 lb.	\$ 2 15
Shorts—200 lb. at \$1.45 per 100 lb.	2 90
Corn flour—501 lb. at \$1.95 per 100 lb.	9 75
Meat scraps—95 lb. at \$4 per 100 lb.	3 80
Bread—30 lb. at \$2 per 100 lb.	0 60
Milk—1,000 lb. at 25 cents per 100 lb.	2 50

\$21.70

Eighty-six ducklings, 310 lb. at market price, June 27, 1914—20 cents	62 00
per lb.	21 70
Total feeding	

Profit over cost of feed.	\$40 30
Amount of feed for every pound of gain. lb.	3'18

Rations—

- Shorts, 2 parts.
Bran, 2 parts.
Corn flour, 2 parts.
Meat scraps, $\frac{1}{2}$ part.
Coarse sand, $\frac{1}{4}$ part.

The whole mixed with sweet or sour milk as a fairly thick mash.

It is recommended to let the ducks take a bath so that they may clean themselves, and to starve them at least twenty-four hours before killing. Ducks are killed in two ways: (1) by disjuncting the vertebrae of the neck, (2) by bleeding, which is done by cutting the veins in the roof of the mouth. They should be chilled before packing.



